

Public Information Department, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340

PRESS RELEASE

March 17, 1987

THE GRAPHIC ART OF THE BARBIZON SCHOOL March 17 - May 17, 1987

Prints and drawings by artists of the Barbizon school, a group of French painters who worked in the village of Barbizon and the forest of Fontainebleau near Paris during the mid-19th century, will be on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art from March 17 through May 17, 1987. In their choice of subject matter--rural landscapes, laboring peasants, animals--and their interest in depicting the momentary effects of light and atmosphere, the Barbizon artists influenced the work of the Impressionists. While earlier artists had used studies from nature to produce idealized landscapes which often served as backdrops for historical, religious, or mythological subjects, the Barbizon artists depicted nature as they found it. Their more immediate and personal responses to nature stimulated a new appreciation of landscape painting and led to the recognition of the sketch done out-of-doors as a work of art.

The exhibition *The Graphic Art of the Barbizon School* comprises 97 works, including superb drawings by Théodore Rousseau and Jean François Millet, and etchings by Charles François Daubigny, Camille Corot, Millet, Charles Jacque, and Adolphe Appian. Also featured are a large number of prints, mainly by Corot and Daubigny, made by the cliché-verre, or glass plate process, which is based on principles of photography. A cliché-verre is made by coating a glass plate with an opaque substance into which a design is scratched. The plate is then placed over light sensitive paper and exposed to sunlight.

Artists began coming to Barbizon in the 1830s, attracted by the variety of subject matter and scenery in the village and nearby forest. The peaceful

2-graphic art of the Barbizon school

countryside also provided a refuge from the urbanization and industrialization of modern life and imparted a sense of stability and continuity with the past.

The Barbizon artists' beliefs in the purifying and ennobling powers of nature and in the virtues of a simple rustic life are beautifully expressed in their prints and drawings. Théodore Rousseau offers two contrasting views of nature: a dramatic rendering in black chalk of a Rocky Cliff on a Coast and a serene Landscape with Fisherman in pen and ink. Charles Francois Daubigny's sixteen etchings, which are mainly of pastoral or woodland scenes, include a depiction of the artist himself painting in the flat-bottomed boat which he used as a floating studio on the rivers of France. His fourteen clichés-verre are a series of impressions that document the effects of light on landscape at various times of the day. Camille Corot's three etchings and fifteen clichés-verre are highly subjective views of nature. The soft, diffused forms of these idyllic landscapes may have been inspired by the blurred images of early photographs which he collected. Jean Francois Millet's works celebrate the nobility and dignity of people living close to the soil. His compassion for his subjects is shown in his etchings of peasants at work (The Diggers, The Gleaners) and in his charming chalk and pastel drawing of a peasant child learning to walk. Charles Jacque, the most prolific printmaker of the group, is represented by nine prints and two drawings of rural scenes, which often include animals that have been faithfully and sympathetically rendered.

The exhibition was organized by Jane Glaubinger, associate curator and acting administrator in the Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings.

#

For additional information or photographs, please contact the public information office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.